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The Stages of Justice: Sketching the Sculpture of William Rush

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The Stages of Justice: Sketching the Sculpture of William Rush

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Introduction

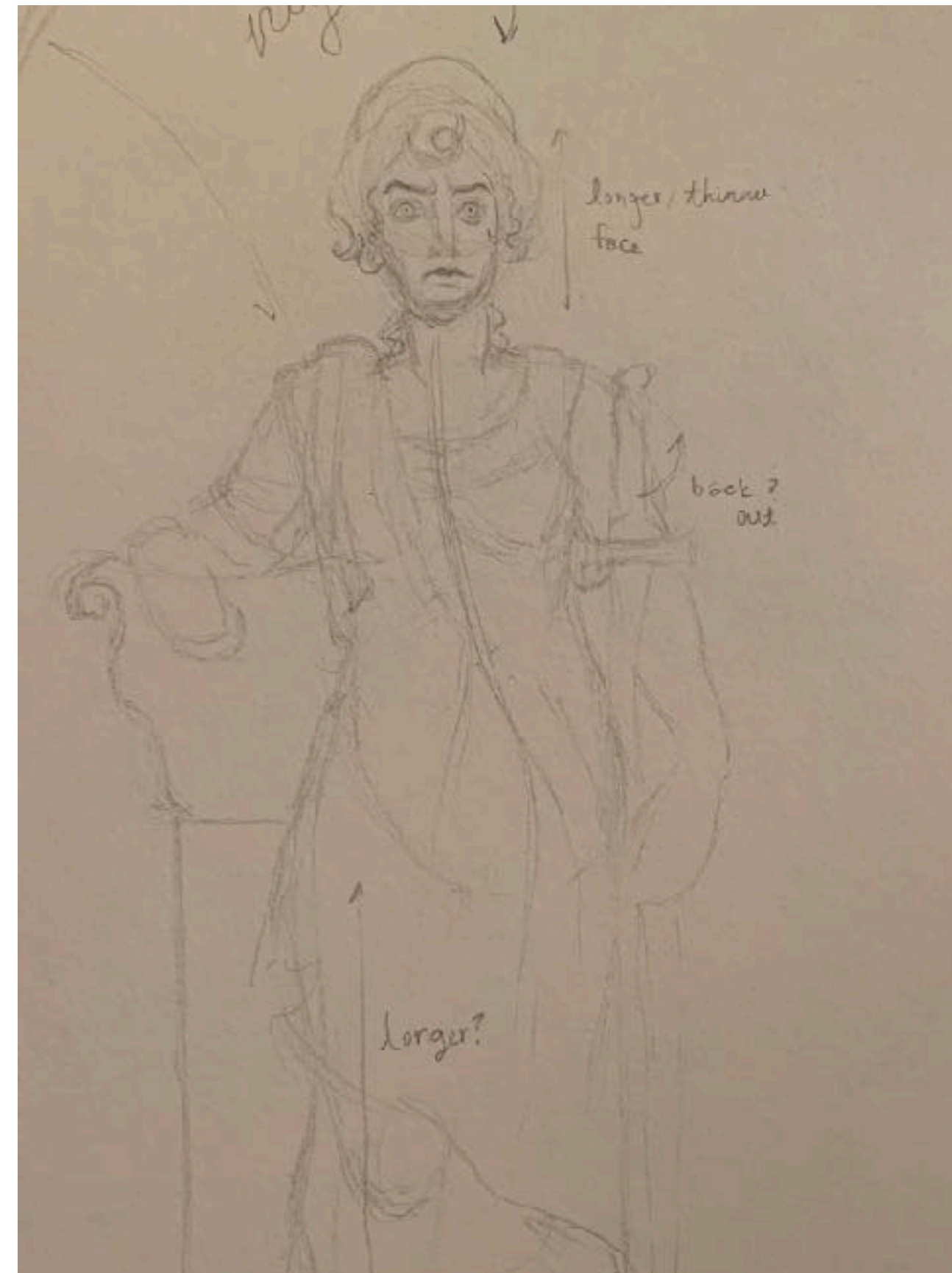
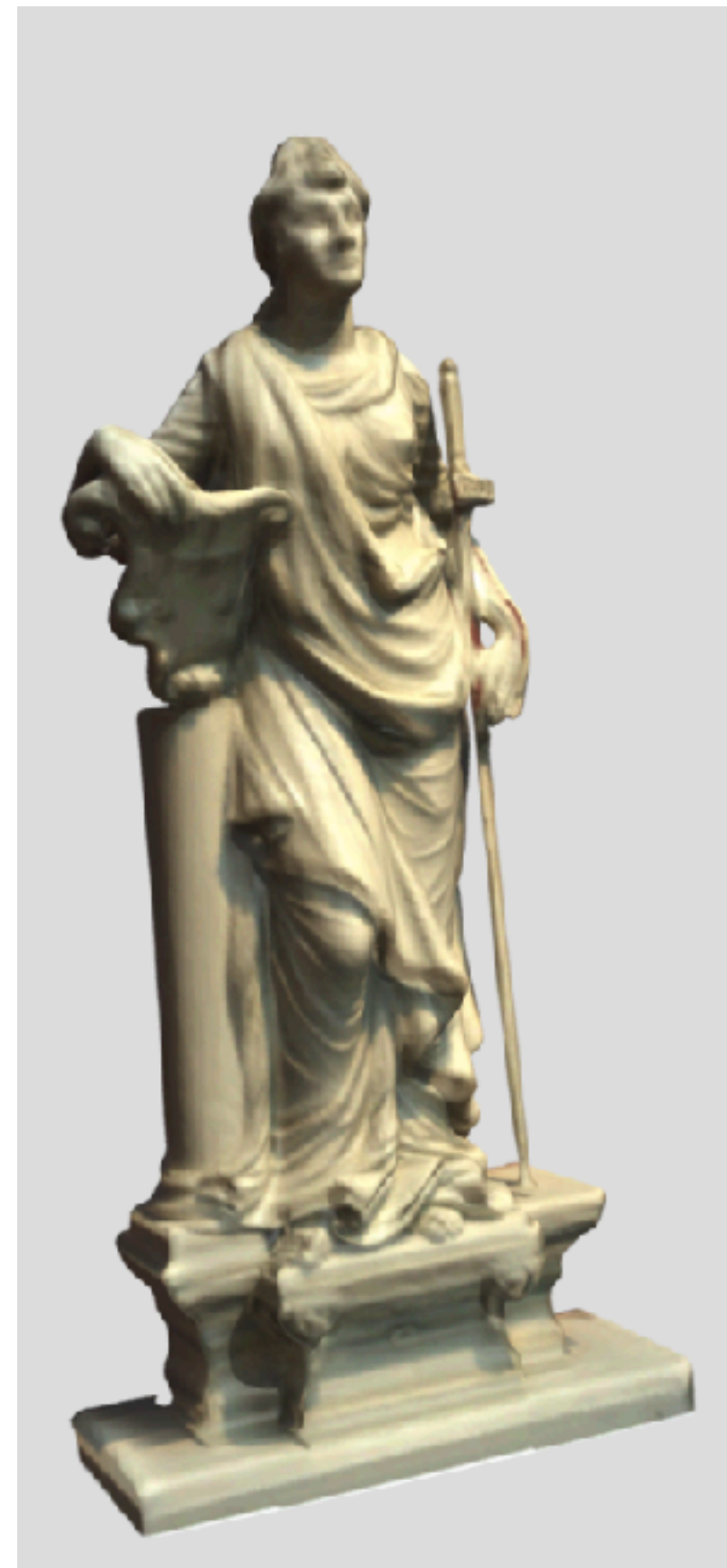
This semester, as an intern at the Virtual Curation Lab (VCL) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), I was given the opportunity to practice illustration. Utilizing Sketchfab, an online database of 3D models, I was able to study the sculpture of American neoclassical sculptor William Rush. This poster showcases the stages of study that I created based on Dr. Means' scan of *Justice*, one of William Rush's sculpture owned by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art (the PAFA).

This task allowed me to develop my skills in illustration, and was also completed remotely. Because the 3D scans of *Justice* were made available by Dr. Means in the VCL's Sketchfab collections, I was able to complete my studies from home.



Sketchfab station! Drawing from sketchfab at home.

The Process: Model to final Study



Pictured above is the VCL's scan of *Justice*, as well as my first sketch of her basic form. I was able to rotate the 3D model, and see it from several different angles. Before adding the detail of all of the drapery, it was important to move the model, and to understand the basic shapes that constituted the sculpture's structure.

In the first sketch, I didn't really do a ton to play around with drapery, shading, or detail. The first step was more about getting *Justice* on the page, and figuring out where to go from there. Rush created pieces that could be characterized as neoclassical; much of his work draws heavy aesthetic influence from classical Greco-Roman sculpture.

While *Justice's* drapery is a key aspect of this inspiration, her posture is a more subtle nod that reveals her classical origins. A characteristic aspect of classical sculpture, called contraposto, is the balancing of tensed and untended limbs on a sculpture to provide aesthetic balance. *Justice's* right arm is relaxed, and juxtaposes the rigidity of her left leg. Her tensed left arm does the same with her right leg, propped against the column. In my first sketch, *Justice* was a little more rigid than in the scan, and that was something that I aimed to fix in the following studies.

Below are the second and final sketches I produced. In the second study, I began to play around with light and shadow more. The detail of the scan provided a good baseline for that experimentation. After feeling better about the basic form and positioning of *Justice*, moving on to the detail was the next step. Most of the original sculpture is modeled to look like drapery, which can sometimes be tricky because of how it obscures form and affects light.

In my third and final study, I tried to bring together all of the changes I had been working on between sketches one and two. Because of the 3D model, and the way I was able to manipulate it in Sketchfab, I'm quite pleased with the final positioning. I used the 3D model as a baseline reference for form, and a photograph for detail work (the head, sword, and shield).

William Rush's *Justice*:
VCL [Scan](#) on Sketchfab

[Photograph](#) on Wikimedia Commons

